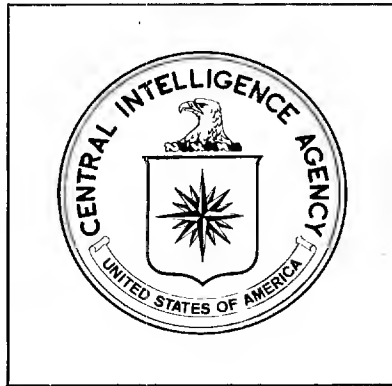


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**Middle East
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No. 0405/75

January 3, 1975

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MIDDLE EAST -- AFRICA -- SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division. Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Iran

Resignation of Opposition Party Leader

The Shah forced the resignation on December 28 of Nasser Ameri--Secretary General of Iran's opposition Mardom Party. The action by the Shah comes on the heels of his recent statements that he would guarantee fair elections and was in favor of a strong two-party system with a vigorous minority party.

Iranian press accounts are taking the line that Ameri, who had held the party post for about 18 months, was asked to resign by the Mardom Central Committee because of his abrasive attitude toward other party leaders and because he held the party up to public ridicule by attacking the results and procedures of municipal elections held last September.

Ameri was dismissed because he had incurred the Shah's displeasure by attributing the success of the ruling Iran Novin Party in the municipal elections to fraud, by mounting strong attacks on the government's budget bill, and by making caustic remarks about the Shah's "White Revolution." A statement in the Mardom party newspaper on December 28 indicating that Ameri intended to use the parliamentary debate to be held on the budget to launch an attack on government mismanagement was apparently the last straw. The Shah reportedly conveyed his desire to see Ameri ousted to the chairman of the Mardom Central Committee; a hastily called special meeting of the committee requested and obtained Ameri's resignation.

the extensive coverage accorded the resignation by the government-controlled press as designed to make an example of Ameri for other politicians who might go too far in their criticism of the government. Mardom parliamentary whip Holaku Rambod apparently took the lesson to heart; his criticism of government policies in a parliamentary speech on December 30 was reportedly considerably milder than what he had originally planned. Rambod appears to be the most likely choice to succeed Ameri as party leader.

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In the wake of Ameri's forced resignation, eleven of his supporters on the Central Committee are said to be considering quitting their party posts. Several of them reportedly are questioning the viability of any opposition party under the present circumstances. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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Zaire

New Economic and Social Measures Announced

The government has announced a new series of economic and social measures. These measures include nationalization of industry, the building trades, and distribution services. Foreign banks will be allowed to operate branches only in Kinshasa. Government officials must turn over to the state all properties they own, as well as previously nationalized properties they have been administering.

Since 1971, President Mobutu has been trying to reduce foreign involvement in Zaire's economy. During 1974, Zaire nationalized all foreign-owned non-industrial enterprises, as well as foreign-owned petroleum storage and distribution facilities.

Most of the Zairians now administering nationalized enterprises are inexperienced in business and do not have access to adequate financial resources. As a result, the nationalization program has hurt the commercial sector of the economy, although apparently not to the extent that might have been expected.

It probably will be some time before the government provides details on its new measures and which businesses will be affected. Mobutu appears determined to bring about complete government control of the economy, and the only facilities likely to remain untouched by his program in the near future are in highly technical industries, such as mining and petroleum.

The government also decreed that:

- The role of the army will be shifted to "agriculture, political education, and military training of the entire population."
- All students must spend one year in compulsory civic service upon completion of secondary school.

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-- All religious teaching in schools and universities is banned.

-- All places that have "figured prominently" in the life of President Mobutu will be made "places of meditation."

The army is likely to have some difficulty in fulfilling its new role. Although its discipline, effectiveness, and political reliability have improved markedly since the early days of independence, the army suffers from a lack of skilled technical personnel, inadequate training facilities, and a weak logistical system.

Students probably will accept their new responsibilities calmly. They have been quiet since the government drafted all college students in 1971, following widespread student protests over poor facilities and inadequate living conditions.

The ban on religious teaching in the schools could provoke a loud response from Zaire's voluble Catholic clergy. Mobutu has managed to reduce the church's power in recent years, but the church does provide a large number of teachers, and education, particularly on the primary and secondary levels, could be seriously impeded if the church withdraws from the school system. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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East Africa

Tanzania-Kenya Dispute Cools

The serious controversy between Kenya and Tanzania over control of the profitable East African transit trade, as well as other transportation problems, was dampened on January 2. After a month of rancorous statements by both sides and the escalation of economic sanctions, Kenya announced on Thursday that it has reopened its border with Tanzania after a 17-day closure. Tanzania followed by agreeing to attend a tripartite meeting with Kenya and Zambia on the transit trade and border issues.

Kenya was hurt by the loss of revenue from this lucrative trade, but Tanzania--already experiencing transportation problems--stood to be harmed even more. Petroleum products for northern Tanzania are largely imported through Mombasa, and a prolonged controversy would cause serious shortages.

On December 1, Tanzania barred heavy Kenyan trucks from using an important stretch of road. The Tanzanians were displeased because the road often required extensive repairs as a result of traffic that primarily benefited the Kenyans. Tanzania, at the time, appeared ready for some compromise, such as permitting the use of alternate routes through the country.

Instead of taking up this opportunity, the Kenyans publicly attacked Tanzania in a vain effort to make it lift the ban without any Kenyan concession. In mid-December, Kenya also shut down all steamer and rail traffic, as well as most road traffic, with Tanzania.

The Tanzanians responded in late December by barring all trucks from KENATCO, the publicly-owned Kenyan trucking company that handles most of the trade between the Zambian copperbelt and the port of Mombasa. The interruption of transit resulted in copper exports piling up at the smelters, and sulphur necessary to the smelting process accumulating at Mombasa.

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Mutual restrictions on transport were accompanied by acrimonious exchanges. Kenya led off by complaining about an earlier repatriation of Kenyan citizens who had been unwilling to take part in Tanzania's nationwide move of rural inhabitants to new socialist villages. The Tanzanian press in mid-December reported a Kenyan announcement that the many Tanzanians in Kenya without visas would be sent home. Shortly afterward, Kenyan spokesmen announced a registration of all aliens and a threat to send home any Tanzanian holding a job that could be performed by a Kenyan. The media of both countries made propaganda attacks on the other, playing on xenophobic feelings enhanced by unemployment and rapidly rising prices.

Whether the current truce holds up may depend in part on the skill of Zambian mediation during the tripartite talks, presumably to be held soon in Lusaka. President Kaunda of Zambia can be expected to urge Tanzanian President Nyerere to find a compromise, and Nyerere is likely to be amenable to such a recommendation. Kaunda and Nyerere are currently associated in delicate and highly important political negotiations about a settlement of southern African issues. Moreover, Tanzania's economic future is closely linked to Zambia's, partly because both countries are associated in the Tanzam railway, scheduled to be completed this year.

The Kenyan government will be under pressure from KENATCO officials to resolve its transportation problems with Tanzania. The government of President Kenyatta, however, will be no pushover at the Lusaka talks. Kenyatta is miffed at Nyerere for letting the Tanzanian press give prominent attention to reports of corrupt dealings in which Kenyatta's wife allegedly had an important role. (CONFIDENTIAL)



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Bangladesh

Extremist Leader Shot by Police

Terrorist leader Siraj Sikdar reportedly was shot to death by the police on January 1 while trying to escape. The killing of Sikdar is the most dramatic event to occur since Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman decreed a state of emergency on December 28.

Sikdar was the political chief of the leftist Proletarian Party of East Bengal (PPEB) which has been engaged in anti-government terrorism since 1972. In recent months, the party has expanded operations into full scale guerrilla warfare in the rural areas of southeastern Bangladesh.

25X1C [REDACTED] the PPEB also planned to begin a campaign in mid-December to assassinate high-level officials in urban areas. Since then several members of Mujib's ruling Awami League, including one parliament member, have been killed, but the PPEB has not been charged with responsibility for the deaths. The government claims that 3,000 Awami League members, six of them members of parliament, have been killed by terrorists since independence.

The killing of Sikdar probably will not measurably reduce the level of political violence. The military wing of the PPEB is led by the highly respected and competent Lieutenant Colonel Ziauddin, whose defection from the Bangladesh army has reportedly influenced a number of junior officers to do the same. Ziauddin will undoubtedly continue his anti-government activities and may even become the PPEB's new political leader.

Other terrorist groups in Bangladesh may curtail their activities temporarily. To reduce terrorism permanently, however, the government would have to launch a more thorough crackdown than it seems presently capable of conducting.

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Except for eliminating Sikdar, the government's only other noteworthy actions since the decree include the arrests of two journalists, a labor leader, and an outspoken civil-libertarian-- probably to encourage discretion on the part of others. Sikdar's death might, in fact, prove counterproductive for the government, by providing the factionalized Bangladesh extremists with a martyr around which several groups could coalesce. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/NO DISSEM ABROAD/BACKGROUND USE ONLY/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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